

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4606

May 18, 2016

Ms. Laura K. Vaught
Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 3426 ARN
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Ms. Vaught,

I have recently been contacted by one of my constituents. Attached, please find a copy of that correspondence.

I would appreciate it if you could look into this matter and provide me with an appropriate response. Thank you.

Sincerely,



MARK R. WARNER
United States Senator

MRW/ma

FLINT MICHIGAN POLLUTED WATER REPORT

A YouTube online video, titled Poisoned Waters: Flint and Environmental Racism coupled with the February 29, 2016, Wall Street Journal headline: Flint's Poorest at Center of Crisis sends a mighty message that Alexandria and VA government leaders should not ignore, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency.

While the hauling of polluted and dangerous soil by trucks for North Old Town Alexandria development might be qualified as Flint-lite, it nonetheless mirrors the story because this nasty stuff will be hauled thru neighborhoods of public housing as well as low-income seniors. Once again, those least able to fight for justice are arbitrarily being put in harm's way, therefore, this might be labeled "environmental injustice."

And just as in Flint, MI, everyone is relying on the state's Department of Environmental Quality to say there's nothing to worry about. In Flint's case, the water mess resulted from trying to save millions of dollars, whereas in Alexandria, it's simply to save the developer around \$2 million additional development dollars to barge rather than truck these materials thru many residential neighborhoods.

Flint's mess could have been avoided had they listened to their own water quality supervisor, Michael Glasgow, who warned the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in an April 17, 2014, email that "...he needed more time to train additional staff and update monitoring plans before the city would be ready to use the Flint River." He continued to say that he had "people above me" making plans to begin distribution ASAP. Glasgow wrote, "If the water is distributed from this plant in the next couple of weeks, it will be against my direction."

Just seven days later, the green light was given to begin and on April 25, Flint's mayor held a news conference citing the shut of flow from Detroit's water department and sending in the Flint River water.

When the extent of the damage and risk to the health of Flint residents, including its poorest children became widespread public knowledge, fingers began pointing in all directions. The New York Times reports that in the past three weeks, a panel appointed by Governor Snyder reported that state officials had for months wrongly brushed aside complaints of contamination. The governor apologized for the state's performance, Michigan's top environmental regulator resigned and federal agencies have stepped in.

Researchers at VA Tech who looked into the lead poisoning were even more damning, reporting that Michigan officials not only ignored complaints about smell, taste and color of the water, but also LIED about the lead levels and tried to conceal the evidence. And that Flint failed in its own lead-testing duties.

All this is to underline the importance that EPA and VA state and congressional representatives demand and perform extensive soil borings under a number of sites in North Old Town Alexandria that obviously contain dangerous contaminants. Too many questions remain about how extensive the threat of adverse impacts is to allow any building permits in this North Old Town area that require demolition and excavation. The VA Department of Environmental Quality's dismissal of danger sounds too much like Michigan's, which should be a grave concern not just to residents but to officials responsible for the health and safety of residents.

It is recommended that the VA Attorney General partner with the Environmental Protection Agency immediately to put in place an injunction to stop any development activities until there is comprehensive testing with results that are both reliable and valid and recommend the best practices and safest practices for removal of contaminated material.